



IN THE ZONE

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RIP OFF THE BAND-AID

I have been doing seminars a long time now and inevitably every year there is a common issue that people are having.

2018 is the year to rip off the band-aid!! What do I mean by this?

I have been helping people to rip off their band-aids- to let go of excuses that are blocking their ability to train and succeed by recognizing problem areas as training issues and not just excuses. I think of excuses as band-aids—something to cover up issues.

They may not necessarily be a problem, but they can be impeding your training in some way.

Here is a small list of band-aids I have heard

- My dog is a rescue
- My dog has never trained here before
- My dog gets crazy with food
- My dog gets crazy for toys
- And on and on and on

I view all the above examples as training opportunities! Lets go over one of the above justifications—I can't use a toy in training because it makes my dog too crazy. I view this as a training opportunity to train the dog impulse control and engagement. I train my dogs that they have to do what I want—whatever it may be- sit, stay, do agility obstacles etc—to get what they want—food, toy, praise, to do agility etc.

I also have a reward marker that means exercise is over toy is coming that teaches my dogs to keep working until they hear me say "YES". This is a significant part of training with toys as it teaches dogs to keep working and not look at the handler until they hear the toy release word.

So back to ripping off the band-aid. If your excuse for not using toys is because it makes my dog too high, you can view this as an opportunity to work through this by ripping off the band-aid and start training with toys. You probably will have to do some toy training away from equipment to teach the dog the toy release word (Doesn't take long) as well as going back to rewarding only an obstacle or two at first. But changing your mentality from an excuse-I can't train with toys-to this is a training issue will make a huge difference in your training. I also think about it like this--- if a toy makes my dog crazy...this is a great opportunity to work through this issue as it can help translate to trial situations. If my dog is crazy at trials (breaks start-lines etc) if I can teach my dog to calm down and THINK using a toy, it will give my dog mental skills that will translate to trials.

Another big one is that my dog is a rescue and admittedly I have said this myself!! When we rescue a dog- especially a dog with baggage- we tend to really 'baby' them because we feel so bad for their past experiences and certainly do not want to add to any of their anxiety. However, we need to ask ourselves if this helpful for the dog or not? Am I am unconsciously labeling my dog a rescue and thus not allowing him to reach his full potential? An example is my dog can't do agility because he is fearful when in actuality agility CAN (not always) help give the dog confidence and help bond with you.

I had a rescue that was so fearful of agility she would urinate as soon she saw agility equipment. I brought out my clicker and she ran and hid under the bed. Obviously, she was severely abused by her former owner (to my knowledge, I was her 4th owner) and I know for sure she was trained for agility.

Throughout her training especially in the beginning, I did use the excuse "she is a rescue" many times...until someone told me to get over it and train her. Well, that is what I did—I ripped off my mental band-aid and trained her. My saving grace for Expedite was she loved tunnels. So I was able to use tunnels to get her to like agility again. I used tunnels to help her learn to trust and love me. It took a few years but she went on to not only earn multiple NATCHES (NADAC Agility Trial Championships), Platinum Speed Stars (NADAC speed awards), she was the 2007 Skilled Veteran Champion at NADAC Championships. I ripped off my band-aid and trained her to be a spectacular agility dog. If I would have gotten stuck in the 'she is a rescue' mentality, I do not think we would have been so successful.

So next time you start to say or even think 'my dog can't do this because of ?????'...stop and say "How can I train this? What steps do I need to do? What skills do I need to teach to work through this? If I don't have the answer, who can I ask for help?

RIP OFF THE BAND-AID and TRAIN your dog !!

Contact me at inthezoneagility.com if you are interested in agility, conditioning and massage seminars, workshops and online classes. I am currently teaching a Successful Start-lines Class through Bobbie Lyons Canine Campus and will be offering online distance training series soon!

About me-

Lisa Schmit, PhD, CCFT, CPMP has been active in agility for over 20 years. She is a NADAC Certified Clinician, Certified Pet Massage Practitioner, FITPAWS Master Trainer, Certified Canine Fitness Trainer and a member of Bobbie Lyon's K9 Fit Team. She gives agility, conditioning and massage seminars across the continent. Lisa hosts over 15 NADAC Trials yearly as In The Zone Agility and In The Zone Agility of Illinois. Lisa has come home from the NADAC Championships with seven trophies with 4 different dogs. At the 2017 NADAC Championships, Revolution was Reserve Champion, JP7 achieved 4 sashes in Starter Stakes, and Tandem and Synergy also made it to finals. In 2017, her four dogs earned 26 NATCHES and 10 Speed Stars. In 2015, Tandem won the highest number of Bonus Points Trophy in Starter Stakes (class at champs that required high level distance skills). From 2008-20011, Moxie and Lisa won their class at champs! In 2007, Expedite won the Skilled Veteran Class and in 2006 Haley (Brittany) won Double Digit Class. Her dogs are consistently in the NADAC Top 10 with Jet was the Highest Scoring Skilled Dog in 2007 and Moxie the Highest Scoring Skilled Dog in 2008. Revolution, JP7, Tandem, Synergy, Moxie and Expedite have also earned numerous NADAC Platinum Speed Star Awards. Revolution, JP7, Tandem, and Synergy have also earned numerous NADAC All Around NATCHES and Speed Stars. Lisa and her dogs have earned over 70 NATCHs. Eight of her dogs have qualifying bonus runs. To view a complete list of accomplishments, videos of runs and photos please visit <http://inthezoneagility.com>.